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Chairman: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 47 TO 65 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT ITEMS

Ms. HASSAN (Somalia): At the outset, Mr. Chairman, permit me to offer you my delegation's warm and sincere felicitations on your well-deserved election to preside over the deliberations of this very important Committee. Your election, Sir, is a tribute to your vast experience and skilful handling of the intricacies of international diplomacy. We also offer our congratulations to the other officers of the Committee.

When we met in the Committee a year ago, to discuss and deliberate on the important agenda item of disarmament, we did so against the backdrop of an extremely favourable international climate. For the first time, the world witnessed the cold war and confrontation of the past between the two super-Powers giving way to a new era of cooperation and compromise. This significant transformation in the East-West ideological conflict and military confrontation was aptly symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall.

As we gather here today there are further encouraging trends towards the easing of the global atmosphere, especially in the direction of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. These positive developments have naturally heightened the expectations of the international community for a peaceful and safer world.

In his report on the work of the Organization the Secretary-General stated:

"At the global level, the priorities include a search for new, stabilizing reductions in nuclear weapons, maintaining the regained momentum of support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear

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Weapons, arresting the uncontrolled proliferation of advanced weapons of mass destruction and the relevant technology, a swift conclusion of a convention for the comprehensive prohibition of chemical weapons and strengthening the basic obligations of the Biological Weapons Convention." (A/46/1, p. 11)

In this connection, I join many previous speakers in welcoming the signing of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in Moscow on 31 July this year by the United States of America and the Soviet Union. This Treaty is intended to reduce their strategic arsenals by 30 per cent. Another positive development in this direction, which we believe will contribute to the achievement of our ultimate goal of complete disarmament, is the recent announcement by President Bush of the United States intention to undertake a unilateral reduction of United States tactical missiles and the reciprocal action by President Gorbachev to do likewise for the Soviet Union.

While, therefore, the international community has a long way to go to achieve this laudable objective, my delegation welcomes the decisions announced by the two leaders as positive steps in the right direction. Comprehensive nuclear disarmament is, however, inextricably tied to the comprehensive test-ban treaty. My delegation shares the view expressed in the Committee that the continued retention and sophistication of nuclear weapons will only encourage proliferation and therefore nullify the efforts of the international community for the eventual elimination of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction.

In the context of the global efforts for nuclear disarmament through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the different regions of the world, the question of the denuclearization of South Africa assumes special

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importance. One of the decisions taken at the summit of the Organization of African Unity at Abuja, Nigeria, in June this year, dealt with the realization of the 1964 Cairo Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa. My delegation continues to hold the view that the accomplishment of this goal will be impossible unless and until South Africa's reported nuclear capability, which has serious implications, especially for the security of the African States, is reversed.

There are, however, hopeful signs that the conclusion and signature by South Africa of the safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency and its accession earlier to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons have diminished the threat posed by that country's nuclear capability. My delegation would, however, like to reiterate that any complacency on our part in this vital matter will be dangerous and detrimental to the peace and security, not only of the countries of Africa, but also of the entire world.

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We therefore continue to believe that, notwithstanding the steps which South Africa has taken in this direction - and to which I have just referred - it is imperative for the international community to keep a close and constant watch on that country's reported development of its nuclear programme.

My delegation has read the report of the Conference on Disarmament with the attention and consideration which it deserves. We were also encouraged to hear from the President of the Conference, the representative of Venezuela, that the main achievement of its discussions was the work accomplished on a preliminary structure of a multilateral convention on the complete and effective prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and their destruction. We share his hope and optimism that by next year a definitive agreement on the convention will be reached.

We are also encouraged to note from his statement that on the issue of the prevention of an arms race in outer space, the deliberations in the Ad Hoc Committee are moving towards a more orderly and systematic dialogue. Somalia has repeatedly stated that it continues to support the peaceful uses of outer space. We therefore join other delegations in opposing, in conformity with United Nations resolutions on the subject, the extension of any military competition or activity to outer space.

It is hardly necessary for my delegation to over-emphasize the important role played by the United Nations in the field of disarmament. We would like to take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Akashi, and his dedicated staff for their part in continuing to play and strengthen this role.

In conclusion, it is my delegation's considered view that in spite of the favourable climate which prevails today on the international political plane -

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a climate which is enabling us to arrive at far-reaching decisions in a spirit of understanding and accommodation - we must not ignore the non-military threat which exists in our midst in the form of serious socio-economic imbalances. There cannot be lasting peace in the world unless and until we make serious efforts to narrow, if not close, the yawning gap between the haves and have-nots of the world. If we do not, all the limited gains we have achieved thus far, especially in the field of disarmament, are bound to come to naught.

Mr. CAMILLERI (Malta): As this is the first time that I am addressing the Committee I should like to congratulate you, Sir, and the other officers of the Committee on your election.

The impact of the far-reaching changes in East-West relations has increasingly become the starting-point of discussions about the current state and prospects of the international order.

Central to the recent developments has been the new spirit of trust that has emerged between the two States which possess by far the two mightiest arsenals. The roots of this trust are various and complex.

Some see the long period of détente and the tentative process of confidence-building which accompanied it as a significant factor in the new developments. Others attach greater significance to the internal developments in the Soviet Union and the impact these developments have had on that country's foreign policies and their consequent effect on outside perceptions. Many are convinced that the primary cause of the new developments has been the bankruptcy of the ideology of communism, and the consequent collapse of the state of confrontaton which it fostered.

No doubt all of these elements have played a part. Divergent views about their relevant importance, as well as about the relevance of other factors,

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will for a long time continue to colour the analysis of the scope and nature of the new world order that is emerging.

There is also the inevitable recognition of the fact, highlighted by the recent experience in the Gulf, and the current tragic events in Yugoslavia, that the disappearance of old confrontations is not, by itself, a panacea for all global ailments.

Most are therefore agreed that, whatever may be the nature of the new world order that is emerging, it brings with it both unexpected opportunities and new challenges, especially on matters relating to disarmament. One essential task for a committee such as ours is to identify as precisely as possible where the new opportunities and the new challenges lie.

One area in which very visible and dramatic changes have taken place is that of nuclear disarmament. A gauge of how fundamental these changes have been is the extent to which decisions and actions inconceivable only a few years ago are now almost taken for granted.

Within an impressively short time the world has seen agreement on a significant dismantling of intermediate-range and strategic nuclear weapons. It has learned of unilateral decisions for extensive reductions in tactical nuclear weapons. It is seeing the progressive withdrawal of nuclear armaments from third countries. It is witnessing the first stages of the dismantling of nuclear weapons on the high seas. There is even the alluring prospect of future cooperation on defence systems against ballistic missiles.

Those voices which only a few years ago were so persuasive in urging caution - to the point of inaction - over nuclear disarmament have either fallen completely silent or, where they attempt to oppose the course of events, are quickly overwhelmed, as was the case in the Soviet Union last

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August. Surprisingly, equally muted sometimes is the voice of some of those who were erstwhile most forceful in condemning an old world order based on the precarious balance of mistrust and escalating nuclear deterrence.

Malta wholeheartedly welcomes these positive developments.

We are particularly satisfied with the decision of both the United States and the Soviet Union to remove all tactical nuclear weapons from surface ships and attack submarines. We consider that this decision will make a positive contribution to security and stability in such enclosed sea areas as the Mediterranean, where, in addition to other considerations, the presence of nuclear armaments carries an exceptional level of risk for the littoral populations.

We respect the wisdom and courage of the United States and Soviet leaders, who have taken the initial and most crucial decisions to launch the process of nuclear disarmament. We urge and encourage them to continue on the path that they have chosen. They no doubt recognized as much as anybody else how much work is still necessary to ensure genuine and lasting stability in international relations.

Many have rightly pointed out that global security cannot however be safeguarded exclusively through unilateral or bilateral action. There comes a point where the whole international community needs to be involved in the process which is unfolding. It is in this context that the search must begin for the new opportunities that are being created and the challenges that arise in their wake.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, it is Malta's hope that the new international environment will give fresh impetus to long-standing endeavours

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in three related areas - a comprehensive test-ban, non-proliferation, and the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The case for putting an end to all nuclear testing is pressing on both security and environmental grounds. The Soviet Union has taken a welcome first step in declaring a unilateral one-year moratorium. The level and sophistication of the existing nuclear arsenals of the major Powers should permit an early horizontal enlargement of the idea of a moratorium. This will constitute an important step towards eventual agreement on converting the existing partial Treaty into a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

In its turn, a comprehensive nuclear-test ban would strengthen and lend credibility to the process of nuclear non-proliferation. In this context we join other speakers in the Committee in welcoming the recent accessions to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as the decision, in principle, by China, France and other States to join.

Non-proliferation is one area where the need is self-evident for collective action beyond the unilateral or bilateral action by the major Powers. It is also an area where the benefits of the new atmosphere of trust between the two super-Powers is clearly not automatically transferable to the rest of the international community.

Two obstacles, among many, loom large in the path of an effective and credible non-proliferation regime. On the one hand, there are the uncertainties created by parties to the NPT seeking to exploit the limitations of the existing safeguards regime and, on the other, there are the equally destabilizing concerns which arise from the fact that some States, with a clear potential for producing nuclear armaments, are still not ready to become parties to the NPT.

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The international community has shown that it can today muster the political will to expose and reverse blatant instances of non-compliance. It should adopt an equally energetic attitude in respect of countries that seek to obscure their nuclear-weapon production activities behind the decision not to participate in the NPT. The ultimate objective can best be secured through a combination of measures which give enhanced credibility to the role of the major nuclear Powers, including assurances of non-use against States not possessing such weapons, while eliminating or greatly reducing the risks arising from non-compliance or non-participation.

With the disappearance of the East-West confrontation, many of the factors that permitted, perhaps even encouraged, non-compliance or non-participation have today disappeared. Free from many of the constraints imposed by strategic considerations of a global nature, countries in different regions may now more freely pursue the objective of seeking agreement on the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The creation of such zones is an important, and perhaps indispensable, accompaniment to the wider process towards nuclear non-proliferaiton. We have much to learn from the positive experiences of the Latin American region in this connection.

In the minds of some, nuclear weapons have gained a sort of macabre legitimacy in the philosophy of deterrence - though this line of thinking is particularly questionable at the regional level. No such considerations can be adduced in respect of chemical or biological weapons.

The process of reaching agreement on a global, effectively verifiable and comprehensive ban on chemical weapons is far advanced in the Conference on Disarmament - sadly the only area where this Conference seems to be making some progress. Malta welcomes the progress which has already been registered

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in this area and urges all parties concerned to spare no effort in reaching agreement on the remaining outstanding problems, in particular the question of verification.

Equally important, in our view, is the process of strengthening the existing verification and control regime under what remains the main arms-reduction treaty open to universal participation - the biological weapons Convention.

In considering these subjects one sadly reflects that mankind cannot ever unlearn any of the destructive secrets which it unravels. It can, however, learn to take collective action to remove the threats which this unravelling brings to its own survival.

The problems connected with conventional weapons cannot be considered in such cataclysmic terms. The objective of reducing the level of conventional armaments remains, nevertheless, a major one in the context of the need to enhance international peace and security.

Many speakers in this Commmittee have reflected upon the fact that one unfortunate result of the end of the cold war appears to have been the unleashing of ethnic, political and territorial disputes that had been suppressed over the last half century. It is perhaps premature to conclude that the spate of new problems which have arisen, especially in Europe, are an integral part of the new international order, rather than a natural, though temporary, process of adjustment to the new realities.

Whatever their long-term import, however, the emergence of these new problems, in conjunction with the more long-standing and unresolved problems in many regions of the world, underline the need for urgent measures to enhance security and stability. These measures include action at the

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international level, especially through a more effective preventive and peace-keeping role by the United Nations, through both the Security Council and the General Assembly. They include action at the regional level where the role of confidence and security building and of disarmament on the model so successfully being pursued in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) is by now well established. They also include action to reduce the level of conventional armaments world wide.

The subject of levels of conventional armaments is attracting particular attention in our Committee this year in the light of the proposal we have before us for the setting up of a register of arms transfers. There is general agreement that measures to enhance the transparency of conventional armaments levels constitutes a useful confidence- and security-building measure in itself. It also promotes the process of reducing conventional armaments. Views are divided, however, on whether the immediate setting up of an arms-transfer register is the most effective first step in this direction.

Malta welcomes the Secretary-General's study on ways and means of promoting transparency in international arms transfers (A/46/301). The report makes mention of the fact that as far back as 1968 Malta co-sponsored a draft resolution in which the Secretary-General was requested to ascertain the position of Member States on a United Nations register of arms transfers. Addressing the Assembly in 1965, just one year after Malta joined this Organization, our then Prime Minister, Mr. George Borg-Olivier, speaking about disarmament said:

> "One such measure would be to publicize, and thus indirectly control, the transfer of armaments between States." (A/PV.1359, para. 14)

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Today we support the proposal for the setting up of an arms-transfer register. We do so in full awareness that arms transfers form only one aspect of the whole question of armaments levels. There are the equally important aspects of production and stockpiling, as well as the related matter of transfer of technology, which must also be tackled.

We do not see, however, that all these aspects must either be tackled together or not at all. Even less do we see that the question of conventional armaments levels should be considered only in conjunction with the question of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear armaments.

There are many sensitivities involved in the question of the setting up of an arms transfers register, some relating to concerns about national sovereignty and the right of self-defence, others to aspects of regional security, and still others to the long-term implications of the issue of transfer of technology and its relevance to development.

In the light of these considerations, it is essential that the decision to set up the register, and particularly its timing, takes into account the legitimate concerns of all parties. Given that, at least at this stage, the register will be a voluntary one, it can be effective only if the decision on its establishment is reached through a genuine consensus. We urge all parties concerned to work constructively towards this consensus.

Many speakers in this Committee and elsewhere have reflected upon the linkages which still exist between questions of disarmament and development, as well as the relevance of environmental considerations in this connection. There is a growing sense that the new spirit of trust and cooperation which has replaced suspicion and confrontation in many important aspects of international life can make a significant contribution towards agreement for a

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better and more rational utilization of global resources in the promotion of the long-term security and well-being of all peoples.

There is, however, also a painful awareness that the international community has not yet managed fully to grasp the new opportunities - that we are still some way from finding the proper means to exploit successfully the immense potential which lies before us. My delegation hopes that our Committee can make a perhaps small but significant contribution in this direction by agreeing on methods of work which would give more relevance to its deliberations and more effectiveness to its decisions. We stand ready to cooperate in all endeavours in this direction.

Mr. AIT CHAALAL (Algeria) (interpretation from French): Mr. Chairman, I should like at the outset to convey to you and to the other officers of the Committee the most cordial congratulations of the Algerian delegation. In our view, your election to your post is a pledge of the successful outcome of our work. You can count on the fullest cooperation from our delegation in the performance of your mission.

The delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco has already addressed the Committee on behalf of the members of the Arab Maghreb Union. He expressed the overall views of the Union on disarmament issues. For my part, I wish to touch on certain specific issues on which we need to work in order to make my country's policies quite clear.

If there is one field in international relations in which historical evolution has yielded positive results and opened the way to major initiatives, it is surely the field of disarmament. There has been a steady succession of agreements, and with each passing day we hear new proposals made in order to reduce the current nuclear capacity, thereby seeking to avert the risk of a conflagration of disastrous consequences for mankind.

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Thus, since the signing of the first nuclear disarmament agreement, in December 1987, two more treaties have been concluded: the first dealt with conventional weapons in Europe and the second was signed between the Soviet Union and the United States and dealt with strategic nuclear weapons. Even more recently, proposals aimed at reducing tactical nuclear capability have been put forward by the United States and were favourably received by the Soviet Union, which, for its part, has put forth constructive proposals adding impetus to the disarmament process. We hope that an agreement on these weapons will be promptly concluded between these two countries and that other initiatives will follow.

Algeria is most gratified at this positive trend in nuclear disarmament, although we are aware that much remains to be done, especially in the multilateral sphere, in order to achieve total and definitive elimination of the nuclear threat.

We welcome these things, first of all, because the agreements and proposals deal with nuclear disarmament, which is and will continue to be a matter of the highest priority, as observed in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Secondly, these disarmament measures are an exceedingly concrete expression of the progress made towards the improvement of international relations through the promotion of dialogue and cooperation as means of settling disputes. Lastly, we welcome these trends because these disarmament measures, partial though they may be in the context of the task to be accomplished, will serve to sustain the momentum in efforts in other areas of disarmament so that the process can be extended to all countries.

(Mr. Ait Chaalal, Algeria)

As meritorious as they may be, the accomplishments realized in disarmament thus far fall far short of our hopes. There are several reasons for this and here are some of them.

The first is that what has been achieved has, essentially, been done within a strictly bilateral context, and we keenly regret that the multilateral framework for negotiations has been, at the very least, marginalized.

The second reason is that the agreements concluded deal solely with measures for the reduction, even the downgrading, of nuclear arsenals but not with radical measures for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

The third reason is that so far no progress has been made towards negotiations on extremely important aspects of disarmament, such as the total banning of nuclear tests, the arms race in outer space, and naval disarmament.

The fourth and last reason I wish to bring up here is that at the same time as the multilateral negotiating framework is being relegated to a marginal status, certain initiatives involving the United Nations have been launched in the absence on a consensus of their priority or urgent status.

In addressing the General Assembly on 27 September, Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi announced that Algeria was initially adhering to four multilateral disarmament instruments. Allow me to refer to them here. They are as follows: the Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare; the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof; the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques; and the Treaty on

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the Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies.

In adhering to these agreements, my country has sought to contribute to the universal task of disarmament and at the same time acknowledge the merits of what has already been achieved and the need to achieve the broadest possible consensus with respect to this undertaking in order to guarantee the strictest possible implementation.

While the quest for universality and disarmament is a praiseworthy objective in itself, this concern must not of itself overshadow the other elements involved in the definition of the policies of States on disarmament instruments. While one may legitimately hope that all countries will join in the disarmament effort, it also seems essential to us that the proper conditions should first be created for the universalization of existing agreements, in particular equal and non-discriminatory implementation of all their provisions and a balance between the obligations of States parties.

In the light of its basic options, Algeria has chosen to develop the search for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in various social and economic spheres. This research programme, which has been conducted openly, has been unilaterally placed under the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency, with which my country has for years had fruitful cooperation. This is why any reservations we may have with regard to a multilateral instrument of whatever sort should not automatically give rise to erroneous and sometimes tendentious interpretations which cast suspicion on any legitimate attempt to acquire and achieve mastery of scientific and technological progress strictly for development needs.

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As a member of the Conference on Disarmament, Algeria is closely involved in the negotiations under way with a view to finalizing an international convention on the complete prohibition of the development, manufacture, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and on their destruction.

Progress made in negotiations on this convention - thanks in particular to the major initiative announced last May by President Bush, which has made it possible to remove certain major obstacles, as well as the agreement now taking shape on various aspects that are still open to dispute - should facilitate the conclusion of this vital instrument in 1992.

(Mr. Ait Chaalal, Algeria)

My country will spare no effort to ensure that this objective is achieved next year.

We cannot but welcome the thought that the draft global convention on chemical weapons may be successfully concluded by the deadline that was set. This gives us hope that the Conference on Disarmament will at last have its original mandate restored and that it will therefore be able to make similar progress in the negotiations on other questions on its agenda. However, as we see it, the conclusion of an international convention should not impede development or access to technology in the chemical industries. The verification system to be set up should not be turned into an insurmountable barrier to the growth of chemical industries in the developing countries, or into a means of supervising them. Only if this prime condition is met can there be universal adherence to the future convention.

In the field of disarmament, Algeria's global approach is based on a consistent policy, which has been corroborated by recent developments on the international scene. We feel that confidence-building and disarmament measures are the successful outcome of a fruitful dialogue aimed at calming and improving relations between States and at settling the conflicts and disputes that give rise to tensions. In this regard, Europe and East-West relations are an edifying example. The clearly expressed will to mitigate past political divergences and long-standing antagonisms has made possible great progress in the disarmament field.

Any disarmament initiative, regardless of its intrinsic merits or the motivation of those promoting it, must be based primarily on the reality of the political environment, its needs and constraints. Our first task is therefore to settle, within a global context that takes account of all the

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dimensions of the question - the political problems that impede a genuine peace and lasting security in various regions.

In this respect, the initiative taken several months ago by the great Powers - an initiative that seeks to establish rules for arms control in the Middle East - does not, by itself, appear to be an ideal response to the problems of the region. Very important questions have simply been overlooked altogether. I refer, for example, to Israel's nuclear capacity, which poses a real threat to peace, and which the Israeli regime stubbornly refuses to place under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Moreover, these initiatives were taken without any prior agreement with the States concerned, as if these States had no right to express a view on the intended measures that have a direct effect on their security needs and, therefore, on their future.

Similarly, the proposal for the establishment of a register of conventional-arms transfers is worthy of consideration. Here again we must, first and foremost, address the causes of the accumulation of weapons, particularly in the developing countries. Moreover, if arms transfers are to be transparent, so must all the other aspects of this question: weapons production, existing stockpiles and transfers of military technology. We must also take into account the defence needs of States, in terms of the security threats they face and the political realities of each region. Transparency in the transfer of weapons of mass destruction must also be an objective.

For these reasons my delegation feels that further consideration must be given to these matters within an appropriate framework and in cooperation with

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all States. They must be examined thoroughly, taking into account, in particular, the priorities of general and complete disarmament, the defence needs of States - indeed, the whole range of related questions. This is an absolute necessity if we really want to achieve the broadest possible consensus on the problem - a sine qua non for the effective implementation of the measures envisaged. In our view, one means of achieving such a consensus on disarmament questions is involvement by the United Nations during all phases of the negotiations on the whole range of these issues.

In conclusion, I wish to say that we look forward very much to an equitable distribution of the peace dividends and to a peace that is sustained primarily by the quest for a just and lasting settlement of the conflicts affecting many peoples throughout the world, by the promotion of genuine development in the third world, by a de-escalation of the arms race and by a transition to a system of international relations governed by the virtues of dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation.

Mr. BILOA TANG (Cameroon) (interpretation from French): The delegation of Cameroon joins with pleasure in the warm congratulations that have been addressed to you, Mr. Chairman, and the other officers of the Committee on your election. There is no doubt that under your guidance, Sir, the Committee will be able to work the more effectively towards strengthening international peace and security. You may rest assured of our entire cooperation in this field.

Even more so than last year, the work of the Committee is going on at an historically favourable time - a time when the improvement in East-West relations and in the international climate in general is leading to new

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initiatives in the field of disarmament: the conclusion of the strategic-arms-reduction Treaty - START - between Washington and Moscow; the decision of the United States to eliminate all land-based and sea-based tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and Asia and to negotiate a substantial reduction in the number of intermediate-range ballistic missiles, and the reciprocal Soviet proposal, demonstrating the will of the two great Powers to make significant progress in the field of disarmament.

Cameroon welcomes these measures as being likely to promote international peace and security, and would like to encourage the search for other such initiatives with a view to achieving greater reductions in the numbers of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction - reductions to a minimum defence level.

(Mr. Biloa Tang, Cameroon)

We believe that the international community must work relentlessly to take advantage of the present propitious climate of détente, which augurs well for the achievement of the common objectives in the field of disarmament that for too long have been hampered by the cold war.

This is why Cameroon believes that unilateral and bilateral initiatives in the field of disarmament, praiseworthy as they may be, should be completed by way of a comprehensive multilateral approach based on consensus. In this connection, the United Nations seems to us to be the most appropriate framework within which to consider the question of disarmament which is the business of us all.

Faced with the disquieting factor that many countries possess huge arsenals of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, it seems necessary and desirable for us to tackle the disarmament problem by taking an integrated approach, if we wish to slow down the arms race and speed up the process of arms reduction and disarmament. We support the efforts made at the multilateral level.

It is in this spirit that Cameroon supports the recommendation relating to the re-establishment in 1992 of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Conference on Disarmament on a comprehensive nuclear-test ban. We hope that the work of that Committee will make it possible to draw up a treaty on the total prohibition of nuclear tests.

We also welcome the fact that several countries have made it possible to advance the universality of the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty; in this connection, we are pleased to note that France, China, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe have decided to accede to the Treaty. We hope that the States which have not yet done so will join the rest of the international community in building a world free of nuclear weapons.

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Furthermore, Cameroon is in favour of expanding the non-proliferation Treaty and of convening the 1995 Conference relative thereto, preparations for which should start in 1993.

Weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical and biological weapons, also deserve the attention of the international community. Cameroon, which supports the ongoing efforts at working out a chemical-weapons convention, hopes that the obstacles to the verification system, which is hampering progress towards final agreement, will be removed by way of compromise, hence making it possible to reach consensus at the 1992 conference.

Consequently, we hope that the future chemical-weapons convention will achieve universal adherence, without prejudice to the possibility of third-world countries developing a chemical industry for peaceful purposes.

Cameroon also supports the conclusions of the Third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on biological weapons, whose Declaration reaffirms that such universal adherence to the Convention would strengthen international peace and security.

In view of the great interest in disarmament matters, Cameroon considers that the participation of all States at all stages of negotiation on these matters at various levels of the multilateral structures set up for this purpose is highly desirable. That is why we reiterate our appeal for the expansion of the composition of the Disarmament Commission.

Moreover, we welcomed the decision taken at the June 1991 session in Geneva on improving the functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. By that decision, non-member States invited to the Conference can now take part in plenary meetings as well as the meetings of auxiliary bodies.

(Mr. Biloa Tang, Cameroon)

One of the lessons of the Gulf War is that monitoring arms transfers is desirable if we wish to prevent a headlong proliferation of armaments. Hence, Cameroon approves the principle of working out, under United Nations auspices, of a universal, non-discriminatory register on the transfer of conventional weapons. But the implementation of such a register raises problems. We believe that all proposals made in this context should be examined in a realistic and open-minded spirit so as to reach a satisfactory compromise.

In his important statement in this Committee Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, declared that the international community has to espouse a multidimensional approach to peace and security in which the military aspect will not dominate but will be considered in relation to other priorities such as development, welfare, the environment and the protection of human rights.

For its part, Cameroon has always had this concern in mind, especially when it suggested the now accepted and established relationship between disarmament and development. Indeed, the strengthening of security at a minimum defence level would make it possible to achieve substantial savings which could be transferred to socio-economic development and the protection of the environment.

Furthermore, disarmament can yield the anticipated results only if it leads to the establishment of trust among States. That is why, while pursuing the final objective of global disarmament, Cameroon encourages all initiatives leading to the promotion of regional disarmament, which is an essential factor of international peace and security.

It is from this perspective that my country hosted from 17 to 21 June last in Yaoundé a seminar/workshop on the solution of conflicts, the

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prevention and management of crises and the strengthening of trust between States members of the Economic Community of Central African States. This activity was organized by the Department for Disarmament Affairs, together with the Government of Cameroon, and involved 10 countries of the subregion. I should like here to thank the United Nations, especially Mr. Akashi, and assure him of Cameroon's readiness to continue cooperating with the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

Participants at these meetings in Yaoundé expressed the wish that the international community continue to support the large-scale initiative of the Central African States which should lead to the conclusion of a non-aggression pact, the adoption of legal instruments dealing with a system of mutual assistance and collective defence at the subregional and regional levels; the creation, through existing universities or military schools in the subregion, of a centre of strategic studies and the establishment of subregional cooperation in the field of military training; the organization of joint military exercises and patrols; the creation, under United Nations auspices, of a permanent consultative committee dealing with security matters; the intensification of the diplomatic presence of each State in the other States of the subregion - which is already being done as much as possible; the reduction of military and security budgets and the diverting of the resources thus freed to socio-economic development, particularly regional and national development projects; the establishment of "red lines" telephone communications between Heads of State or Government; and the strengthening of economic cooperation, as provided for in the Treaty setting up the Economic Community of Central African States.

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The conclusions of the Yaoundé Seminar-Workshop, which have already been transmitted to the Secretary-General, will, at an appropriate time, be the subject of a resolution on behalf of all the countries of the subregion. We trust that it will be unanimously endorsed by the Committee and, subsequently, by the General Assembly.

Lastly, the current international situation gives rise to numerous hopes that are also challenges to the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

Cameroon, a small country, is of the view that the United Nations must continue to be the ideal framework for negotiations on all issues of common concern to the assembly of nations. We should thus endeavour unstintingly to strengthen the role of the United Nations. Cameroon, for its part, will spare no effort to make its modest contribution to this end.

Mr. GARCIA MORITAN (Argentina) (interpretation from Spanish): I should like to say how gratified my delegation is to see the representative of Poland, whose political record is well known to all members, in charge of the First Committee. And, of course, it is the First Committee of the General Assembly for good reason.

Moreover, I should like to thank the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Kheradi, who has been, as it were, a continuing driving force in our efforts here over the years.

I wish to express my Government's gratitude to the Department for Disarmament Affairs as a whole and, in particular, to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, for the hard work he has carried out and the dedication and efficiency that he has demonstrated in the cause of disarmament in recent years. The increasingly

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active presence of the United Nations in this field is essential, I would even say crucial, in the formation of a renewed international framework and the initiation of a reinvigorated disarmament process.

Recently, I was privileged to preside over the Third Review Conference of the Parties to the bacteriological weapons Convention, and I must say that in my personal opinion the States parties are greatly indebted to the United Nations for its success. The admirable work of the Secretary of the Conference, Mr. Sammy Kum Buo, his entire team and the Geneva Branch of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, led so efficiently by Ambassador Berasategui, deserve our particular gratitude.

The presence on the podium of the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Komatina, has a significance that needs to be emphasized. The work of the Conference secretariat is of unique value and immense significance in the negotiation processes. In this context, the work carried out by Ambassador Komatina in his dual role as Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and as Secretary-General of the Conference has been immensely valuable in the complex negotiation phases and also at the present time when progress is being made towards a chemical weapons convention. His name is already written in the annals of diplomacy as a man of major achievement.

The recurrence of our annual meeting in the First Committee, besides responding to the logic of the calendar of conferences, allows us to step back from past events and assess them in the context of our work. A couple of years ago, the leitmotif in all statments made before the Committee was no doubt the process of change in Eastern Europe, which, by directly influencing the evolution of the strategic confrontation between East and West, even to

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the point of rendering it meaningless, made us think of the need to reconsider in their entirety the features and scope of the multilateral security agenda.

In 1990 we came to this forum holding our breath, in view of the possibility, which later became a reality, of an armed conflict in the Gulf. Moreover, we wondered what would be the impact of that crisis on what, until then, had seemed a promising outlook in the field of disarmament and security.

Today, although that crisis, at least in its most serious aspects, has been overcome, new challenges are emerging, challenges that we might say arise from the indomitable will of the peoples of the world to achieve freedom and democracy and to grow into more just societies, where privation is not the rule.

The question we should answer in this specific context is to what extent, and how, the existing framework, the present disarmament and security agenda, is adequate to the current world situation.

Our answer is that we should act in an effective and determined way, bringing about the necessary changes so that the multilateral analysis of security is not reduced to a mere passive echoing of facts and events that take place beyond the scope of the First Committee or even of the Conference on Disarmament itself, which, perhaps a little pompously, we continue to label as the "single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum". And in saying this, I wonder whether our almost automatic reiteration of this definition is not directly proportional to the loss of real influence that multilateral mechanisms have suffered in recent years in the field of security.

Fortunately, today the prestige of the United Nations has been strengthened. Thus a new opportunity is emerging - not the only one, or the last one, but perhaps the right one - to imagine the new multilateral disarmament agenda for the closing years of the century.

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The task may sound presumptuous, and perhaps it would be presumptuous if it were merely seen as a whimsical response, ex nihilo, as it were, to the devising of an agenda and institutional machinery bearing no relation to any specific need.

All we mean is that, plainly and modestly, we, the multilateral negotiators on disarmament, should also turn the page in history that reality and the world around us boldly turned some time ago.

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We must begin thinking about the fourth special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament. More than three years ago, the third special session came to a close, leaving the bitter aftertaste of failure to adopt a final document by consensus. I do not intend today to examine the reasons behind something that happened in the past; something, besides, for which there are as many explanations as there are delegations in this hall. I will simply say that that failure was the first overt sign of the obvious divergence between our words and reality. After three and a half years and hundreds of meetings in various forums - whose influence in the field of disarmament could be described, I dare say, as marginal - that first sign has become an obvious reality that perhaps we should not continue to ignore.

In only a few months, in accordance with its timetable, the Conference on Disarmament will submit to the General Assembly the definitive text of the convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons. Once that has been done, there will remain no question on which we can all agree as a substantive subject of negotiation at the multilateral level.

Does this mean that there are no issues that are responsive to multilateral treatment? Absolutely not.

We must therefore reflect on the security agenda and try to identify the areas that require a new approach. In a way, this practice has already begun in forums such as the United Nations Disarmament Commission. In pursuance of its legitimate task of preparing subjects for negotiation, the Commission, by focusing on more practical matters, has substantially reduced an agenda that was overloaded and was thus doomed to failure.

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This task, which the Commission has initiated with some success, should be carried on by this Committee. In particular, it might be useful to envisage a special session of the General Assembly to tackle this group of issues as a whole in an effort to provide appropriate solutions to the problems of the closing years of the century.

It is not, in our view, a question of setting new priorities or of fighting rhetorical battles to force into the text of a document commitments that States are not willing to make at the level of real political decision-making. We are familiar with this practice; we have suffered through it before and we should be able to avoid repeating it.

The task that we have in mind would be to prepare a brief text, practically an agenda or a list of subjects that might be defined as operative, as opposed to the comprehensive political agenda that includes priorities and issues that apparently do not, for the time being, lend themselves to multilateral negotiation. The contents of this operative disarmament agenda would be varied and there would be no reason to discard priorities that were not under discussion. If we follow this plan, we can see that there are certain clear issues.

For example, the prevention of an arms race in outer space raises questions that lend themselves very clearly to multilateral consideration. A superficial reading of the last report of the relevant Ad Hoc Committee of the Conference on Disarmament shows that the development of measures to protect satellites for non-military use is in the interests not only of the space Powers but also of those who wish to join in the exploration and exploitation of space.

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The implementation of confidence-building measures in space was first sanctioned by the General Assembly a little over a year ago when it adopted resolution 45/55 B (1990). Thus there arose an entire range of new possibilities that should be encouraged in a field where human activity will develop greatly in the very near future. This is an example of a subject that merits further exploration.

Once the pressing issue of chemical warfare has been solved with the forthcoming adoption of the convention, there will still be pending issues on our list such as that of bacteriological warfare.

Soon, as a result of the Third Review Conference held in Geneva, a group of experts will meet to analyse from a scientific and technical point of view the feasibility of potential verification measures. The Review Conference, in its final declaration, indicated that the experts' report might be analysed at a later date by the States Parties if they so desired. The question arises, then, of whether it might be advisable to give a mandate to the Disarmament Conference, with its long experience of negotiation on chemical warfare, to consider additional measures in the field of bio-scientific activities that reinforce in one way or another the regime that today is based solely on the convention and national measures.

There are other lesser-known issues, but perhaps they will be given greater priority in the years to come. I mean, for example, the question of multilateral consideration of a series of standards that regulate and channel the transfer of dual technologies in various fields. In 1991 Argentina and Brazil started to emphasize the need for a broad, unbiased debate on a subject that up to now has not received either a sufficient or perhaps entirely appropriate focus. I refer to the need to reconcile the legitimate use of,

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and access by all States to the technologies of progress and well-being with the requirements of a safe, stable world.

Here we have another subject that is ripe for renewed multilateral consideration. The enormous scope of the conventional disarmament question, even taking into account its regional configurations and peculiarities, does have certain features that may be dealt with globally. The recent report of the group of experts on international arms transfers is most illuminating in this regard.

Another area that has not yet received the attention it deserves is the link between disarmament and security and the other high priority of the 1990s - environmental protection. Almost 15 years ago the Disarmament Conference produced the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques (ENMOD). The Gulf War proved that the subject-matter of the Convention was in fact not nearly so hypothetical or unrealistic as many hastened to declare.

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Is the ENMOD Convention as comprehensive as it should be? Are its terms clear enough to prevent covert violations, which, after all, are clear examples of the hostile use of ecosystems? This is another issue that calls for multilateral attention.

Of course, this list does not exhaust the various possibilities and issues that are ready for practical and effective consideration at a multilateral level. In this respect, it would be useful for other delegations, in the light of their global and regional perceptions and individual realities, to state their opinions so that we may develop together a new agenda setting specific objectives.

In our opinion, the options are clear. On the one hand, we could insist on our differences in a process that can only lead to an increasingly pronounced marginalization of the multilateral mechanisms for disarmament, with unpredictable results; on the other hand, we prefer and would like to encourage the joint development of a new operative agenda within the framework of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.